Virginia Wildlife

DECEMBER 1978
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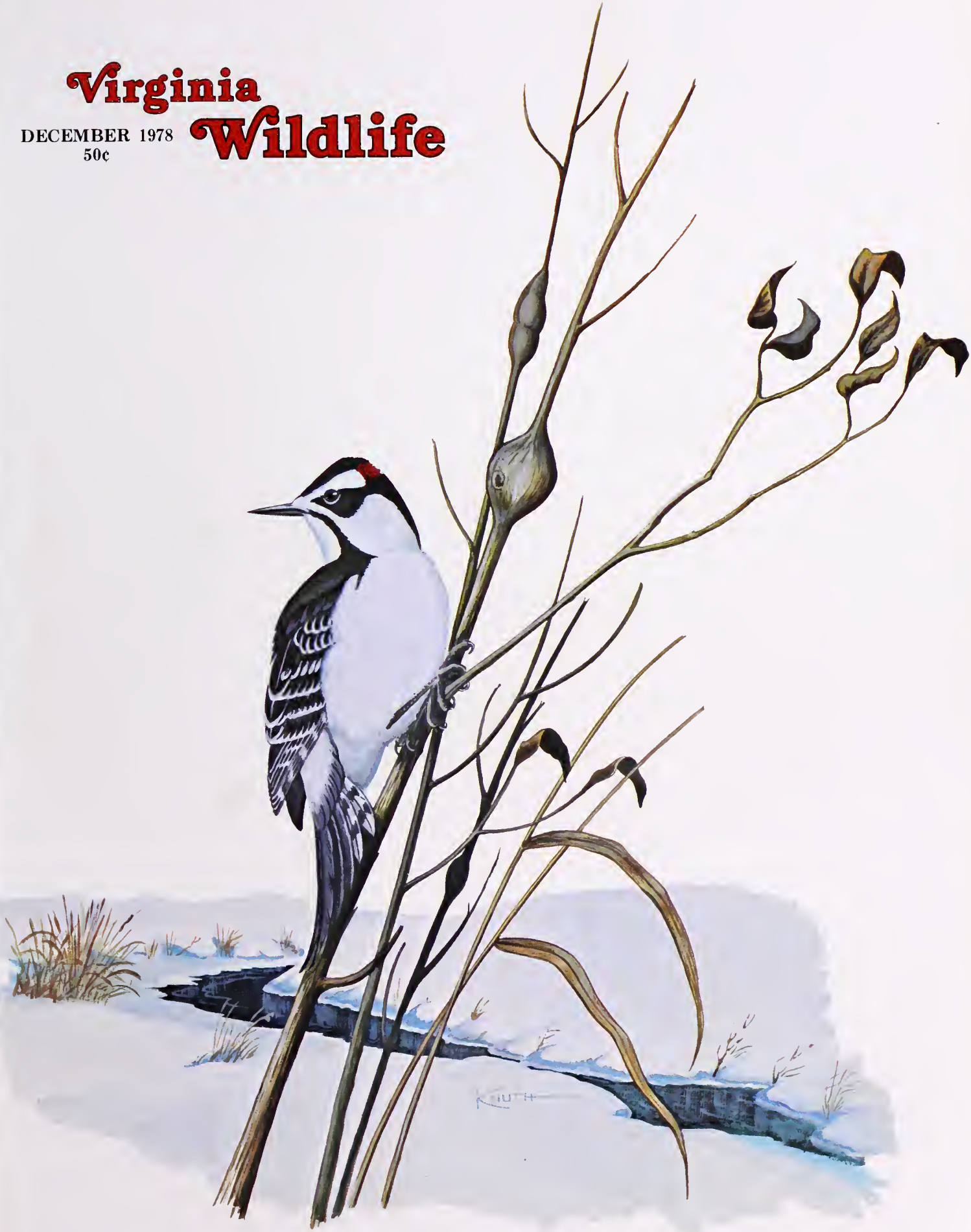

Virginia Wildlife

December 1978, Volume XXXIX, No. 12

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
JOHN N. DALTON, GOVERNOR

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Editorial

LETS FIGHT!
GUEST EDITORIAL

One of the common enemies wildlife managers and sportsmen face is the slob hunter. Such people are the greatest threat to the sport, more so than the anti-hunters and the antigun movement, more so than dwindling hunting lands, more so than anything.

For too long, we've let these kooks be a part of our sport. We've coddled them. We've listened to them brag about killing out of season or exceeding their limit.

Let's admit that there are people who call themselves hunters whom we shouldn't like. They are bums. They think only of killing. They have no respect for the rights of others or for wildlife and its habitat.

The time has come when we should tell them that we don't appreciate them whatsoever. We should kick them out of our sport.

One of the best ways to rid them of our ranks is to let them know through our attitudes and actions that they aren't appreciated, that, indeed, they won't be tolerated.

I believe a way to accomplish this is to encourage our hunters to do a better job of reporting illegal hunting activities to the authorities, such as yourself, especially to the game wardens. We need to work together to educate our people along this line.

Unfortunately, for some reason, the same good citizens who quickly would report a robbery or hit-and-run accident will turn his back on a game law violation. Slob hunters should be treated as the outlaws they are. Too often we've made them heroes when in reality they are bums.

Somehow, we need to do a better job of reporting game law violations and convictions in the newspaper. We need to name names, to tell about illegal acts, to report judgments where all can see who is doing the dirty work.

Some papers are doing a pretty good job of this, and sportsmen should encourage and support this effort, particularly in the county weeklies.

After all, how can we educate the masses to believe in hunting when we ourselves can't believe in hunters. Unfortunately, people outside the sport often don't distinguish the difference between the hunter and the hooligan out wearing a red coat. But we must.

I think hunting is worth writing about, and if it is worth writing about, it is worth fighting for.

Bill Cochran, Roanoke Time & World News
Taken from an address given to the Commission's Game Division

Letters

OUTDOORSPERSONS

Thank you for the October article "A Fever to Fish." I, too, fished as a child and met with much the same aggravation. When are sporting people going to learn there is a closet market of sportswomen with dollars to spend?

E. Ann Hinds
Norfolk

MATCHMAKER

Some time ago I purchased a 3 year subscription to your magazine at a Commission display at a shopping center. While filling out the form, I met a young lady also purchasing a subscription. As the days passed, we discovered many interests in common and we married. Therefore, I would like to consolidate our two subscriptions into one!

John Prominshi
McLean

Glad we could help!—Asst. Editor

UNION CAMP TALKS

I found your article on hunting the corporate lands in October *Virginia Wildlife* to be accurate, interesting and constructive. What Bob Gooch states is true, "the future of hunting depends almost entirely on the conduct of those who use them." Rutting wet roads with 4-wheel drive vehicles has been costly to us. Also, there has been noticed a lack of courtesy and consideration of the rights of others exhibited. We will be happy to send details of our Union Camp hunting program to anyone who inquires.

R. M. Osborn
Union Camp Corporation
Franklin, Virginia 23851

KEEP IT UP

I can't help but notice that *Virginia Wildlife* is getting better every month! The articles are more informative and the pages are prettier each month. Thanks for a great conservation magazine.

R. Coleman
Richmond

RIFLE DEBATE

I was born in Lunenburg county and have hunted every season here since I was 10 or 12 years old. Lunenburg recently passed an ordinance banning the use of hunting rifles. I maintain that the rifle is the safest gun that we have and that the shotgun is the most deadly.

Hester L. Clark
Meherrin

During the 1977-78 hunting season, rifles were responsible for 17 accidents (1 fatality) while shotguns were involved in 52 accidents (9 fatal). A standard 30/30 or 30/.06 hunting round fired from the shoulder (60 inches) at the center of a deer's chest (28 inches from the ground) at 100 yards would strike the ground in considerably less than 100 yards beyond the deer. Shotgun rounds presumably fired at shorter distances would strike the ground somewhat sooner. In either case, the entire path of the projectile should be visible to the shooter. People are awed by the range of the rifle which has little bearing on safety in normal use of the weapon.

BY JIM MIZE

CKS DUCKS DUCKS DUCKS

Nature's citizens have faced the hardships of winter for eons, existing today only because their ancestors learned the necessary tricks of survival. Though survival techniques of most animals are similar in principle, no two techniques are quite the same. For example, furbearing animals such as beavers, grow winter coats for additional protection against the cold. As water temperatures dive, fish slow their metabolic rates, using less energy and thus requiring less food. Other animals prefer to sleep through the winter in different ways. Turtles burrow into the mud until spring thaws coax them back above the ground. Bears, at least those in northern climates, spend the winter in a cave. Then there is another group of animals that head for sunny beaches and warmer climates when temperatures drop. But probably the best known member of this migratory clan is the duck.

One's first guess would be that these guys have it made, spending the summer in cool climates up north and whiling away the winters in the sunny south. Occasionally, however, these fellows underestimate distance, flight times, or just get lazy and stop too soon. In any event, our feathered friends occasionally have to face winter just like everyone else. How do they do it? Well, that depends on the duck and his lifestyle.

Ducks come in all shapes and sizes, differing not only in looks, but also in behavior. Flight patterns, feeding habits, nesting sites and food preferences vary, enabling the environment to better accommodate these winged creatures. For all their differences though, most ducks may be classified into one of two groups: puddle ducks or diving ducks.

As indicated by the name, puddle ducks seem to prefer fresh, shallow water, whether it be a river, pond, or shallow marsh. One obvious reason for this preference may be seen at feeding time. Most puddle ducks tip up to feed, searching the bottom for edible tidbits — and this feeding method is easiest in shallow water where the ducks can easily reach bottom.

Occasionally, puddle ducks venture onto land in search of food. Corn, wild grains, and acorns make up a significant portion of their diet. Although they walk with a distinct waddling motion, these ducks can move with surprising speed. Since their legs are located near the center of their bodies, they have good balance and are more agile than they appear.

Puddle ducks also have a distinctive pattern of taking to the air. When the time comes for take-off, these ducks appear to jump vertically, hesitate for an instant, then move forward into flight. Among the more common puddle ducks are mallards, black ducks, teal, and wood ducks.

The diving ducks on the other hand, frequent larger bodies of water than do their puddle-loving relatives. Instead of tipping up in shallow water for food, the diving ducks swim underwater in search of plants and meaty edibles.

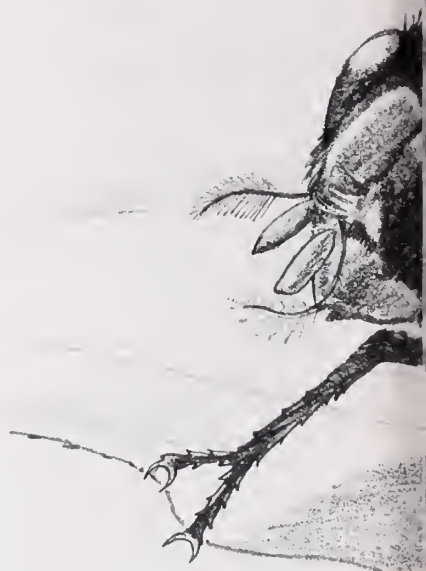
Diving ducks rarely take to land in search of food, and for good reason. Their legs being further to the rear, these ducks have less walking ability and poor balance. Once on solid ground, they are virtually helpless.

Instead of leaping into flight like the puddle ducks, diving ducks need running room. To become airborne, they must run across the water, flapping their wings to gain momentum. Once they gain sufficient speed, they take to the air. Often the flight is short and only a few feet above water level. Canvasbacks, redheads, scaup, and goldeneye are among the members of this group.

When the first morning light is accompanied by single digit temperatures and negative chill factors, ducks of both groups begin to question their choice of wintering grounds. The puddle duck may land in his favorite feeding hole, only to slide across it on the ice. Once he recovers his poise, he may decide to "hike" around and look for some food if the ground is still bare. If this proves futile, he will likely lift off in search of open water and warmer beaches.

Waking to frozen surroundings, the diving duck may also have some awkward moments. He does have an advantage over the puddle-dweller, however, in that his feeding grounds being larger and deeper are less likely to freeze. Finding an opening in the ice, the diving duck can slip beneath to eat his fill. Should he decide to move, however, he is not likely to win prizes for his grace. Sputtering across the ice on webbed skates, the diver must struggle to gain the necessary momentum for take-off. A stop on ice or land leaves him nearly helpless, and for that reason he may prefer not to fly in the first place.

In a harsh winter, both puddle and diving ducks may have difficulty finding food. Grainfields, ponds, rivers and lakes freeze over, making feeding difficult if not impossible. Having flown away from cold weather throughout the centuries, these ducks never learned the tricks of survival used by permanent inhabitants. Although ducks grow special fall and winter plumage, it is not always sufficient to offset winter's icy winds. In this respect, the furbearers have an edge on the duck. Fish also have an apparent advantage, as they can sit out the cold spells in anticipation of spring. At times like these the duck may wish he could hide in the mud like the turtle or hibernate in a cave like the bear, but these are not tricks he learned from his ancestors. Instead, he has learned how it feels to be a duck out of water.



BY ROBERT D. HALL

BLOW FLIES

In today's modern world of air conditioning, screens and efficient sewage disposal systems, few people recall the swarms of flies which only a generation ago were considered a necessary evil of life. But hunters or fishermen in Virginia's outdoors often enter man's age-old struggle against myriad insects. In early spring, black flies torment the sportsman without head net or insect repellent. Summer horse flies and deer flies inflict painful bites, various bees and wasps sting the unsuspecting nimrod, and an encounter with the tiny chigger or "redbug" is seldom forgotten. Blow flies are found much of the year in rural Virginia. These members of the Dipterous family *Caliphoridae* perform continuously, efficiently and uncomplainingly a task which is an ecological necessity for the natural cycle of energy and minerals.

At one time or another, many people have observed these robust, typically metallic-hued insects buzzing about a pile of animal droppings, or stumbled across a decomposing carcass teeming with "worms" or maggots. Bacteria, many types of worms and beetles all contribute to the breaking down of animal and plant waste and carrion, releasing stored energy and permitting the return of minerals to the soil where they can again be utilized by plants, renewing the food cycle. Blow flies are an important link in this chain, for in their vast numbers and facile movement they are able to locate virtually all such sources of nutrition. The female flies lay quantities of eggs on exposed carrion or waste (called "blowing"); these eggs hatch rapidly to wriggling, wormlike larvae — commonly termed maggots. This larval stage performs the important ecological contribution of the species. The larvae feed avidly upon decomposing matter, opening channels which permit the entry of additional animals such as beetles, thereby hastening the carcass' disappearance from the landscape.

A fisherman enjoying fast-paced flyrod bugging for bluegills at a pond in midsummer, may carelessly toss his fish on the bank. Often when the action slows and he surveys his catch, he finds the gills of his fish stuffed with masses of tiny white eggs and swarms of bright green flies buzzing noisily in the grass nearby. Similarly, the early season hunter might down a trophy buck when the weather is still warm, carefully field-dress and hang his game to cool, later discovering that opened body cavities are filled with thousands of squirming larvae.

The family *Calliphoridae* is distributed over much of the world and contains many different species of flies. Though some are strikingly different in size and color, identification of many species is a task best handled by a skilled entomologist.

Greenbottle flies (typically represented in Virginia by *Lucilia* and *Phaenicia* species) are bright green to coppery colored. Other flies may closely resemble greenbottles, but these *Calliphorids* are the insects most likely to deposit eggs on a freshly killed carcass. Because these flies occur primarily in the summer, they are of more concern to fishermen than hunters.

Bluebottle flies are members of the tribe *Calliphorini*. There are several species of these large, metallic-blue insects in Virginia. Often mistaken for "house flies" at first glance, these slow-moving flies can produce an annoying hum. They are hardy creatures found in greater numbers in early spring and late fall. *Calliphora* are frequently attracted to carrion, and *calliphora vicina* is among the last of the blow flies to disappear in the fall. *Cynomyopsis cadaverina* (Robineau-Disvoidy), the shiny bluebottle fly, is an early spring and late fall carrion breeder which has been collected in various parts of Virginia. On a cold November day with a cover of snow still on the ground, it is not impossible to find several bluebottles resting on the sunny side of tree trunks.

Phornia regina (Meigen) is called the black blow fly and is an early spring/late fall species found throughout much of Virginia. Specialists consider it a cold weather blow fly and have recorded many instances where carcasses were filled with maggots of this species.

Studies have shown that there is a definite ecological succession of blow fly and related species in an animal carcass. Freshly killed meat draws *Phoenicia* species primarily (at the time of the year when present). As the carrion ages, *Calliphora* and *Cynomyopsis* species are attracted. In the oldest carcass of the most putrid sort, *Sarcophaga* species may be found. The latter flies belong to a related but separate family, the *Sarcophagidae* or flesh flies. This typical succession can be valuable in determing the

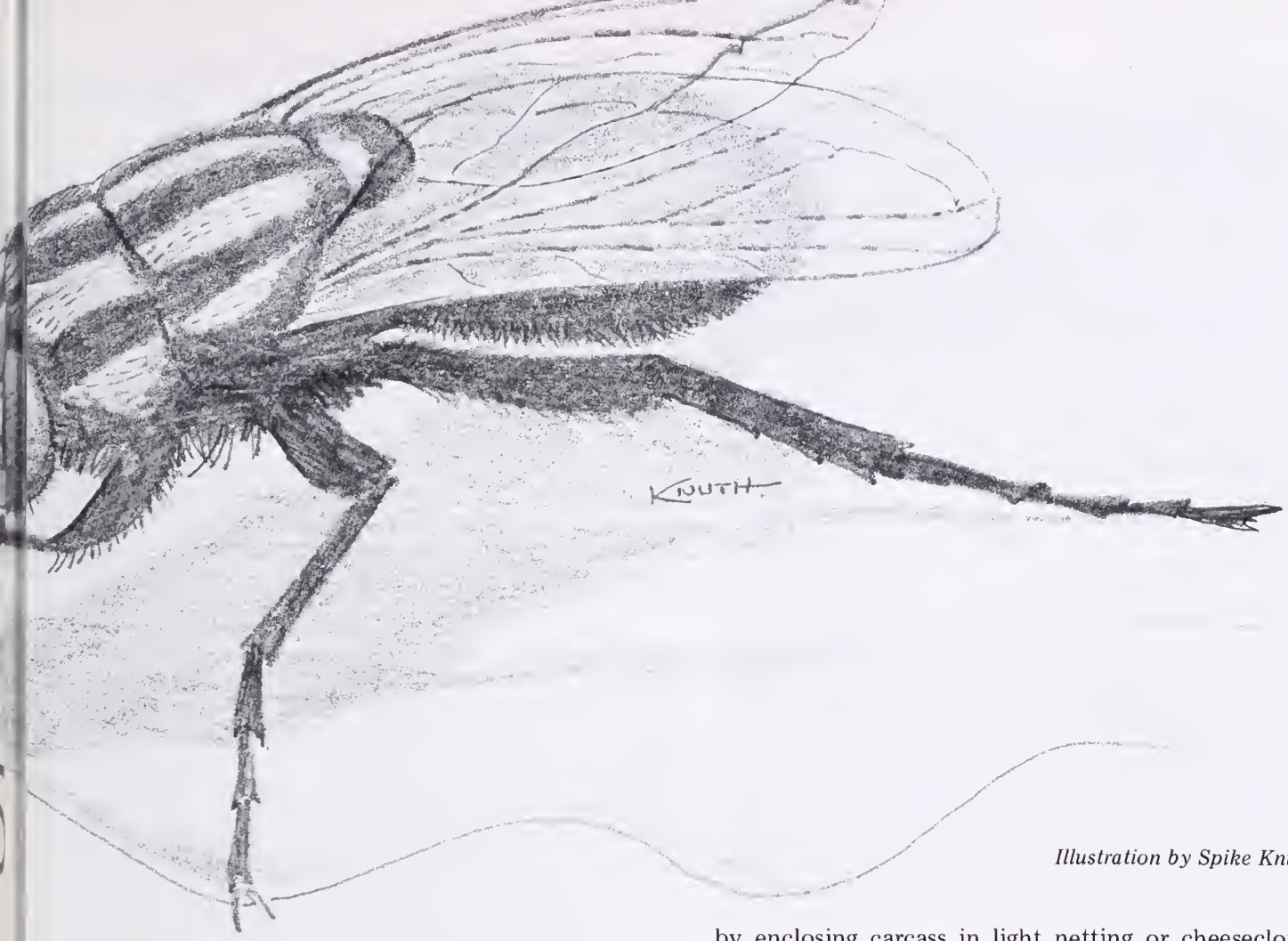


Illustration by Spike Knuth

length of time an animal has been dead.

Because many species of blow flies may be found during the open hunting season, the sportsman should take some simple precautions to prevent his game from falling victim to these insects. Upland game, as well as squirrels and rabbits which are customarily tucked immediately into a game bag, is not often attached. A deer carcass, exposed for several hours or longer is almost certain to attract blow flies. The smaller the amount of exposed flesh, the better. Consequently, when I field-dress a deer I make the incision no larger than required to get the job done. There is little reason to split the rib cage all the way to the throat, for the lungs, heart and esophague can be removed through the abdominal cut. This requires reaching up into the chest and doing a bit of blind knife work, but the end result makes for a neater job and is less apt to permit entry of debris into the body cavity. Also, there is that much less exposed meat for blow flies to light upon.

After the deer is properly hog-dressed and tagged, remove it at once from the vicinity of the intestinal contents. This material which has been removed during the dressing process is an excellent fly attractant, frequently sought by entomologists who wish to collect carrion breeding flies. There is no reason to make your game more attractive to insects than necessary.

Deer should be hung with the body cavity propped open to cool properly. Fly attack can be prevented by enclosing carcass in light netting or cheesecloth. This material permits effective air circulation while keeping insects at a safe distance. Some people recommend sprinkling black pepper on exposed meat. While I've had no experience with the effectiveness of this technique, it may be useful for a deer dragged a long distance on a warm day.

Fishermen probably have the easiest time preventing blow fly damage to their catch. It is only necessary to place the fish on a stringer in the water or in a water-filled bucket.

During the processing of game animals there is no cause for despair if a few fly larvae are found. These may be picked out and the affected portion of meat trimmed away. A large mass of larvae, however, is probably indicative of meat which has had sufficient time to spoil, and should be discarded. This preventable occurance is a distressing waste of a valuable resource.

On your next outing, hunting or fishing trip, you might look with increased interest and respect upon these strikingly colored insects who perform a valuable ecological service. While many species are capable of carrying disease, actual instances of transmission in Virginia today are few. Problems with certain species whose larvae invade living animals and sometimes man are being surmounted by continuing scientific research. The place of the blow fly in nature is assured. With the present economic situation, where would one find a substitute who would do the same same job with equal fervor — and for the same price?

CONFESSIONS OF A WOODCOCK HUNTER

Eager to be the first to arrive at my favorite woodcock spot, I rolled out of bed at 6 a.m. to begin the hour long drive to Quantico Marine Base. Each carload's probably going to be spread out over the best birch bottom. "That pickup driver's got his eye on my other favorite covert." "Should have left before dawn," I scolded myself.

Hunting woodcock on public game lands can do that to a person. Hotspots are often small, well-defined areas that can be hunted by one or two sportsmen in half a day or less. Fortunately for the woodcock hunter in Virginia, he has few competitors for the damp thick bottomlands he chooses to hunt. But the imagination can play funny tricks.

When I finally pulled off the road at the area I intended to hunt, I was crestfallen. Four vehicles were parked neatly in a row at the hunting site. This many woodcock hunters in the woods already? It was too bad to be true. As it turned out, it wasn't. All the cars carried bow-deer hunters. From the blank stares I got when I told several of them that I was hunting woodcock, most didn't even know what the bird was.

What drew me to this rich bottomland Saturday morning was the large number of timberdoodles I'd discovered there the previous morning on opening day of woodcock season. The birch-choked stream bottoms literally teemed with birds. Poor shooting allowed me to remain in the field for much of the day and flush birds at every turn.

Starting things off properly, the first bird flushed the minute I walked into the woods. In poor form, I missed him cleanly. After bagging a brace of timberdoodles further into the cover, I worked back towards where the first one had landed and reflushed him, missing once again. By the third flush and miss I had chased the poor bird in a complete circle back to his initial holding spot. After three misses I relinquished my right to shoot at this particular bird. He'd earned his freedom!

But there were many others to take his place. A half hour into the next cover, three woodcock flushed in rapid succession from an area no bigger than a yard square. One of these finally came down — part way. The bird lodged in a wedge of a birch scaling 20 feet up. A shake of the slender tree trunk popped him down neatly into my outstretched hand.

Many more memorable flushes, along with a few good and a lot of bad shots, followed that opening day. Incredibly, on this popular public hunting area, I saw no other woodcock hunters.

Virginia Game Commission surveys show that approximately 10 thousand hunters pursue the woodcock each year in the state. This may sound like quite a few, but when you spread this number out over the entire state, each woodcock hunter has a lot of territory to cover! According to the survey figures, approximately one in every 50 hunters pursues woodcock in the Old Dominion.

The lack of timberdoodle fans certainly can't be attributed to any scarcity of birds or huntable terrain. My hunts over the last several years have turned up woodcock in good to excellent numbers virtually every time out, except for a few trips late in the season when the major flights had already passed through.

Basically, the lack of woodcock hunters can probably be attributed to the lack of any definite traditions of hunting the bird in our area. In New England the woodcock is hunted as much as the bobwhite and mourning dove are here. New England lacks the bobwhite populations we have in Virginia, while we do not lack their woodcock populations when the flights are in. The birds are thick in many areas in early fall.

In recent years Virginia's season on woodcock has been opening on or near the end of October. This is usually timed to coincide perfectly with the heaviest flights of migratory birds. Sharp frosts in the northeastern states set the birds on their migration routes, which take them through eastern and mid-western states to Louisiana, where the major wintering grounds for woodcock are found.

Few pursue this wily game bird. Timberdoodles offer a challenge to any hunter.

Though woodcock are occasionally bagged on wooded hillsides, the premier spots in Virginia are thick, damp creek bottoms where the moist ground provides easy penetration for the timberdoodle's long beak in his quest for earthworms. Young birch thickets in bottomlands are almost sure to hold birds.

The pleasant thing about woodcock hunting is that once you locate a good cover, you can return to it year after year and find birds there. Indeed, it's almost possible to pinpoint within 5 or 10 feet where a woodcock will lie — season after season.

Woodcock are an especially gratifying game bird for the hunter who does not own a dog to pursue. Since the birds congregate so thickly along damp creek bottoms, it's possible to hunt a small, narrowly

BY GERALD ALMY

Illustration by Katheryn E. O'Bryan

defined area and come into contact with many birds in a day afield.

Once you develop an eye for woodcock cover and learn the best ways to flush them, it's very satisfying to hunt timberdoodles without canine assistance. Depending upon whether the birds have been hunted a lot to the north on their migration, they may be rather flighty or tightsitting. Generally, the latter is the more accurate description. I've come within a step of putting my foot on a woodcock before. Birds erupting within a yard or two of the hunter is a common experience.

Because of this squatting nature and the narrow confines of good woodcock cover, the most effective hunting strategy involves a slow, detailed coverage of the territory (provided you are sure there are birds present and you are flushing some to prove it). A cover 100 yards long and half as wide, roughly the size of a football field, might occupy a hunter for as much as two or three hours, if birds are coming up with regularity.

One of the most helpful techniques for jump shooting woodcock is the stop-and-go method. Hunting this way, the gunner will walk about 50 feet, stop, wait 20 or 30 seconds, and then proceed. You'll be amazed how many birds you can fly with this approach that would normally have tried to sit still and let you walk right by, relying on their excellent camouflaged plumage to protect them.

A woodcock flush is a strange thing. I've heard many of them get up, but for the life of me, I can't describe with any great accuracy the sound they make. It's not a cheep; it's not a whistle . . . suffice it to say, you won't confuse it with a quail or grouse. No such roar of wings accompanies the woodcock's takeoff.

Though woodcock can offer easy shots on occasion, this isn't the norm. Just let a few birds that have been shot at in their northern habitat arrive and find out you're after them!

Variety is the key word. The birds can flush straight up, which is a favorite tactic in short, dense sapling growth. They can also fly straight off, barely clearing the ground. Then they may twist in a corkscrew pattern that's sure to elicit curses from dumbfounded wingshooters. It's almost like watching a helicopter in flight when a woodcock gets up in dense cover.

One bird I flushed recently shot straight up for 3 feet, made a right angle turn, side-slipped 2 feet to avoid a branch, made another 90 degreee turn upwards, and leveled off to disappear in the brush! Needless to say, I missed this one with both barrels.

With such an erratic flier and with hunting territory generally being very thick, open chokes are the overwhelming first choice among woodcock gunners. Often shots come as close as 10 or 15 yards, and rarely are they over 25 or 30. The birds have usually disappeared in the brush by this distance. If you don't have a dog, it's best to pass up these long shots, regardless of your choke. Downed woodcock are simply too difficult to find at long ranges without canine assistance.

The woodcock gun should have a short barrel and be lightweight for fast swinging and easy handling in the dense sapling growth where the best woodcock hunting occurs. My preference hedges towards a 16-gauge double with 25-inch barrels without choke. But any lightweight scattergun from 12 to 28 gauge with an open or improved choke and reasonably short barrel will do well on woodcock. One hunting companion, Ranny Isenberg of Mannassas, uses a Remington 1100. This is a heavy gun, but with the short, wide-open slug barrel, it throws a dandy woodcock pattern.

Loads for woodcock should be light No. 8's or 9's. The birds are fragile and come down easily. Hence, the more pellets you can throw out, the more chances there are that a few may penetrate the dense vegetation and hit a vital area on the bird.

When you do bring down a woodcock, you're in for a gastronomical delight. The timberdoodle is touted the world over for its gourmet food status. The meat is tender and flavorful with pale legs and dark breast. A rare treat, indeed.

Photo by Mel White

BY ROBERT L. LOCHMILLER

BIRDING!

Birdwatching, though practiced since the dawn of man, has come into its' own within the last 20 years. No longer attracting any certain segment of the population, the sport claims senior citizens as well as young men not long ago thought too rugged for birding.

The popular image of the average birder is at striking variance with reality. It can be so strenous an activity, that some bird watchers exceed hunters and fishermen in endurance and physical stamina.

According to a recent survey, the typical birdwatcher is male, white, married, above average in education and income and is either retired or a young professional.

However, there are several different levels at which to pursue birding. Many are content to feed birds at their window or to enjoy the early morning sounds of a wood thrush. At the other end of the spectrum, are those who will travel thousands of miles to observe a new bird species and add it to their "life list" of birds. The competition is great among some birders to see who can achieve the astonishing feat of observing all of the 800 or so species of North American birds.

According to a survey taken in 1970, the number of birders at that time was 7 million, while bird and wildlife photographers added 3 million to that figure. There is little doubt that the number has increased dramatically since that time, judging by the steadily increasing memberships in birding and related conservation organizations. The Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation are good examples of such concerned groups.

The degree to which birdwatchers and bird photographers are willing to pursue their sport is readily reflected in their expenditures for equipment and accessories. Items vary from bird feeders and birdseed to expensive binoculars and photographic equipment. According to one recent estimate, approximately 20 percent of the American households buy an average of 60 pounds of birdseed each year. This amounts to about 15 million families feeding birds at a total annual expenditure of $170 million.

Many buy feeders in which to place the birdseed and supply birdhouses in hopes of attracting permanent backyard residents. Estimated expenditures for these items was about $15 million in 1974.

Birdwatching accounts for about one-half to one-third of all binocular sales. These, of course, are standard equipment for any serious birder. Field guides, photographic equipment, bird books and bird

club membership fees all contribute to the annual expenditures by bird watchers.

The totals estimated for all direct expenditures relating to birding was approximately $500 million. Of course, this can't include expenses for gas, food and lodging connected with the birder's excursions in pursuit of his quarry. Clearly, birders are a dedicated lot!

In addition to a good set of field glasses, a serious birder will need a complete guide book. Two very good ones are Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America and Birds of North America* by Brunn, Zim and Singer. These field guides are durable and comparatively inexpensive. For the beginning birder, these two items are the only equipment needed to begin the rewarding sport of bird observation.

There are a few rules that the birder must observe if he desires a successful expedition. The first of these is to remain quiet. Rushing headlong through the woods, stepping on brittle twings and crashing though the underbrush will result in the birder seeing little of anything. Walk quietly, stopping to listen every few steps. Violent motions should be avoided, for they will frighten birds. Brightly colored clothing should also be vetoed in favor of more somber, neutral tones that blend well with vegetation.

For those seriously interested in birding, joining the Virginia Society of Ornithology is a natural step. The Society includes both professional birders as well as enthusiastic amateurs. Field trips, annual meetings, study projects and a quarterly publication known as *The Raven* are among the benefits accorded members. More information can be obtained by contacting Richard H. Peake, Clinch Valley College of the University of Virginia, Wise, Virginia 24293.

BIRD WATCHING ETIQUETTE

1. Avoid the use of tape-recorded territorial calls of rare birds that are actually breeding.
2. Observe nests from a distance great enough so that parent birds are not disturbed.
3. Do not follow or harass rare or endangered birds. Do not remove their young or eggs from the nest in order to photograph them.
4. Respect the property and wishes of the private landowner.
5. Avoid extremely large groups, especially in critical habitat.

A MASSANUTTEN BUCK

BY GERALD ALMY

The squirrels' carefree pitter patter on the oak leaves carpeting the mountainside halted abruptly. Both bushytails began barking angrily in unison.

For a moment, I thought I had made some careless movement that had alerted them to my presence 30 feet down the slope, perched on a blowdown. But I knew I hadn't stirred. Remaining completely immobile on a crude stand such as a fallen log is no easy task — you know whether you are doing it right or not, and I was as still as a stone statue when the squirrels began chattering.

Though I was hunting on National Forest land, I doubted another hunter had spooked them. This was a remote area, and the terrain was far too steep for most hunters' preferences. It had to be deer disturbing the squirrel's frolicking. As I ever-so-slowly twisted my neck towards the commotion, a patch of grey moving a step 20 yards above the chattering bushytails caught my eye. Soon three deer were clearly visible — all doe from what I could see.

The whitetails were working at an angle down the mountainside, and I was directly on their projected course. Though I had turned my neck with excruciating slowness to avoid spooking them, it was apparent they didn't like the looks of the red-coated, orange-capped object slouched on the log below them. The large doe leading the two smaller deer eyed me harshly and stomped her feet repeatedly in a vain effort to bluff me out of their route down to the lush valley bottom.

When I refused to move, the trio continued their trek, veering off to the left, still staying about 30 yards away from me. My neck was kinking up rapidly from the contortion act I'd forced upon it, but I didn't want to stop watching. Finally, the big doe, trailed like shadows by her two smooth-headed companions, circled back to investigate me further from a downhill vantage point. Watching her peer and crane her neck in excruciating curiosity, trying to figure out what I was, filled me with joy. Twenty minutes after the squirrels had first started barking the three deer were in a row barely 40 feet from me, all staring intently. The big doe's eyes pierced through me, like daggers. As I rolled my eyes to gaze at the two smaller deer, the large doe, and a split second later her two younger companions, bolted in a flash, leapt around the knoll, and stomped up the mountainside.

This was my reward for the opening day of deer season in the George Washington National Forest in western Virginia. Frankly, I was delighted with the encounter. Some hunters are upset if they don't get a buck the first day, but experiences such as the one described above are a rare pleasure for most hunters. Such close and lively encounters with whitetail deer are unforgettable experiences.

I had been hunting along this particular hollow, mountainside, and ridgetop on the Massanutten range south of Front Royal, Virginia, for two years without scoring on a buck. But I had come to know the deer in this particular area fairly well, and learned some of their habits. Eventually, with persistence and determination, I knew my efforts would pay off.

The George Washington National Forest is one of the most popular deer hunting spots in Virginia. With over one million acres (a small portion of which overlaps into West Virginia) deer hunters have plenty of space to pursue their quarry. Camping is permitted in the forest, and many fine trout streams offer a good way to break up the hunting during midday hours when most deer are bedded down. Turkey are abundant in this mountainous area, and many are bagged each year by rifle-wielding deer hunters when scattered birds wander by a lucky hunter's stand.

Shenandoah County, where I was hunting, is one of the better deer counties in western Virginia, usually ranking among the top four or five counties west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. During the 1975 season, 1,495 deer were harvested in Shenandoah County out of a record 63,443 deer bagged statewide. Rockingham, which adjoins Shenandoah County to the southwest almost always ranks as number one west of the Blue Ridge, with tallies over 2,000 each season.

Mountain deer in Virginia are often regarded as slightly more difficult to bag than those taken east of the Blue Ridge chain, from Piedmont and Tidewater

The quest for deer can be a frustrating one. But the results are worth it to most dedicated hunters.

farms and forests. But as a general rule, the deer in the flatter portions of the state are smaller than their mountain counterparts. The steep terrain of the western areas also discourages many prospective mountain deer hunters. But those who return each year to the ridges and hollows find this an added element of challenge which enriches their hunt and makes the taste of success that much sweeter when it arrives.

A tactic which often proves fruitful in the mountains is to pattern the deer in a specific area. Learn their routines and habits. Where do they spend their mornings, evenings, nights, and midday hours? This is no easy task, and anyone who tells you it is obviously hasn't done much of it himself—not in the mountains, anyway.

It may take several years before you fully understand the movements of a particular group of deer, unless you can devote a concentrated week or two of effort before and during the season. As a general rule, many mountain deer spend their nights down in the valleys and flatlands where they find succulent grasses, ferns, fruits and nuts, as well as farmland crops such as corn. These deer usually move out before or just at daylight, trekking up the mountain to remote, difficult-to-reach bedding areas with good vantage points to watch out for danger. Seldom is this bedding area more than a mile as the crow flies from the bottomland. However, as the deer travels, weaving diagonally up the mountainside, it may be a two or three mile walk.

Whitetails often move up to these bedding areas before daybreak, which makes catching them in the morning quite difficult. The exception would be if you knew approximately where the deer bed and could get in to the area without spooking them before daylight and wait for them to come in.

The difficulty of ambushing the deer in the morning was proved to me repeatedly in the Massanutten hollow I was working. My best efforts to circle around the deer and catch them working up the mountain were rebuffed time and again. A snort, stomping of feet in the pre-dawn darkness, and that was it. They had vanished.

Afternoon seemed to be the best time to score, since I could enter from below and wait part way up the mountain for the deer to come down to me. By getting in during the middle of the afternoon before the deer began working down, I could be still and waiting as they trekked down the steep-sloping terrain. The does on Monday afternoon had proven this theory correct, though the buck I hoped was traveling with them was nowhere in sight.

The following day, after failing once more in the morning to get in before daylight above the deer without spooking them, I did some more scouting and chose a log further up the mountain where I hoped my buck would come.

Unfortunately, as I worked my way slowly to the stand that afternoon, another hunter was visible straddling a log in the lip of an adjacent hollow. He didn't seem to see me, so I debated whether to leave and try somewhere else. When I walked over to the chosen log to sit down, however, it was clear that he was looking for deer coming from the opposite direction. When I settled on the log, he was actually out of sight, around the knoll from my stand.

But my patience was whittling away rapidly. The only straw holding me back now was the other hunter around the corner. I feared if I moved and tried to sneak around the knoll where the buck had gone to surprise him and get a quick shot, I might spook another deer I hadn't seen and ruin the other hunter's chance to score.

Twenty minutes after the initial sighting of the buck, I decided to throw all caution to the winds and leave the stand. (This, of course, was a foolhardy decision, doomed to failure.) Just as I was about to make my move, the faintest pitter patter of rustling leaves greeted my ears. Immediately I sank back to the log and began slowly raising the Marlin cal. .35. It was him. I knew it even before I saw the deer. When he popped into vision barely 40 feet away, he was leisurely feeding and moseying along the faint trail below me.

The gun was almost fully mounted, and I was breathing heavily. Millions of needles pierced my arms, hands, and shoulders. I couldn't believe the deer did not notice me at such close range. He was feeding and walking straight at me. Only a few small sapplings between us made me hold fire. Finally he cleared them and continued forward. At fifteen feet the .35 echoed through the mountainsides and the Massanutten hunt was finished. The buck slouched instantly, slid five feet, and came to repose at the base of a lofty oak.

Coat of Arms

BY BILL TREADWELL

An old cliche frequently quoted in the apparel industry says: "It's the clothes that make the man." Another expression similarly heard is: "A man's personality is revealed by the clothes he wears." The businessman dresses to look his part, as does the sportsman in modern day society.

The selectivity of hunting attire has come a long way since the days of the classic buffalo plaid and traditional canvasback coats. One only need to quickly thumb through several of the many sportsmen's catalogs to see the glamorous lines available to hunters and outdoorsmen. And those figures in fine print below the product description reflect that sensible prices are almost a thing of the past.

I guess this is one of the reasons why I haven't parted ways with a few personal articles of hunting clothes. Man frequently will change cars, jobs and homes, but becomes very reluctant when it comes to parting with "his" hunting gear. Oh, sure, some items must be replaced due to attrition or battle fatigue. But some garments manage to survive for another season, possibly because they were made in the days when things were made to last.

So it is with a particular game vest I sport. The J. C. Higgins label is barely legible now after its nineteen seasons of continuous use. Either I grew in to the vest over the years, or I stopped growing at the age of thirteen.

There are just some things a person gets attached to — and I find parting with this vest a disturbing thought. I have been tempted to trade it in, but breaking in a new one would not be the same and could be more trouble than necessary.

A degree of sentiment is felt when describing this dirty-tan piece of fabric worn on numerous trips afield. The material is becoming so frail that it appears to have been tailored from parchment paper. But many memories are stored in my vest besides the game it has transported from the corn fields or windswept mountain hollows. It has been among a lot of hunting companions who have since come and gone; absorbed countless rounds of recoil from shots fired; covered thousands of miles of blood, sweat and tears; and seen colorful Virginia autumns seldom duplicated. It has withstood the heat of hot September afternoons and the penetrating chill of January snows.

The hunting vest or coat comes in various sizes, shapes, colors and designs. Far from its sporty appearance, it can contain useful items that come in handy while spending a day in the wild. One pocket always holds that favorite brand of chewing tobacco; in another, a pack of partially wet matches, usually soaked from body perspiration. For the all-day hunter, two ham sandwiches, a candy bar and can of soda.

On several occasions, the "game bag" was used to store apples collected from a nearby orchard when the doves failed to fly. Or, pine cones, because my wife wanted to make a Christmas floral arrangement.

During one rare experience, a tube of Chap-stik carried along on a bird hunt got mixed in with a pocket full of number 7½'s. Following the excitement of flushing several large coveys of quail, my frozen fingers mistakenly sent the tube down the top barrel of my over/under shotgun. When the gun failed to fire on a rising single, I discovered one empty chamber and the reason for it at my feet.

At other times it conceals those non-essentials you "really need" like emptied shot from a poorly crimped reload; leaves, twigs and berries accumulated while maneuvering through thick brush; an assortment of bird feathers stuck to the plastic-coated bag lining; number four magnums when dove hunting; or a spare key to the car that was sold two years ago.

Some develop a great affection for the clothes they wear afield.

My vest is visibly showing its age and probably should have been retired a long time ago. It has been mended so many times that it resembles a fine piece of needlepoint. When thread won't hold it together, iron-on patches and safety pins are used to conceal the rips from barbed wire fences and jagged tree limbs. More than once have I returned to places hunted to retrace my steps and find unfired shells on the ground that found their way out of the shell pouch. Some of its scars are decorated with emblems of achievement or hunt club patches like "preserve game — use a bird dog," or "25 straight" on skeet, or "The Ancient and Honorable Order of Bush Worn Partridge Hunters."

It provides some warmth from the elements, protects your skin and that $17 Orvis shirt when climbing under fences. It has rolled down a few embankments, been splattered with mud, dripped with early morning dew and endured years of rain, sleet and snow. It has become so water logged at times that it is able to stand up by itself to dry in a corner of the room without support.

The game vest becomes a part of the person, almost like a portion of his body. This battle-worn, blood stained vest serves as the status symbol or trademark of the hunter. You are more likely to find it spotted with tobacco juice stains or dog prints from an excited Brittany as he abounds from his water soaked kennel in anticipation of the days hunt, than find a dry cleaning tag attached to it.

I doubt that this vest will become an acclaimed legend in the ranks of hunting circles. In recent seasons it has become subjected to uncalled for criticism, been stared at, and even raised a few grins. But to this hunter, my vest is the last thing I'll put to rest.

VIRGINIANS HONORED

PHOTO REPORT BY F. N. SATTERLEE

Photo by H. Gillam

Governor's Award as State Conservationist of The Year for 1978 went to Francis N. Satterlee, Information Officer/Pilot for the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries. Satterlee is accompanied by his wife Joanne as he proudly displays the trophy presented to him by Virginia Attorney General J. Marshall Coleman and the Sears Roebuck representative, Henry Horton.

Mrs. Susan Thompson Wilburn Hoffman receives a Certificate of Merit for her work in communications, while serving with the Governor's council on the Environment. Presenting the award is Dr. Gerald H. Cross from VPI & SU, also a Vice President of the Virginia Wildlife Federation.

Dr. Allan A. Hoffman of the Game Commission, right, responds after having been presented with the award as Water Conservationist of The Year for his work on the scenic Staunton Project.

E. Floyd Yates, center, recipient of the Forest Conservationist of The Year Award, is flanked by the dignitaries who jointly bestowed the honors. On the left is J. Marshall Coleman, Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and on the right is Henry Horton of Sears Roebuck and Company.

Two members of the Commission, a former Commissioner and the wife of a current Commissioner were among those honored at the Virginia Wildlife Federation's Governor's Award Program held October 21, 1978 in Alexandria, Va. Mrs. Susan Thompson Wilburn Hoffman, wife of Dr. Allan A. Hoffman, Fifth Congressional District Commissioner, was the recipient of a Certificate of Merit awarded to her for Communications. Commissioner Hoffman was recognized as the Water Conservationist of The Year. E. Floyd Yates of Powhatan, Va. who from 1966 until 1972 was 4th Congressional District Commissioner, was presented an award as the Forest Conservationist of The Year. The Governor's Award as State Conservationist of The Year went to Francis N. Satterlee, Information Officer/Pilot from the Game Commission's Education Division.

The Virginia Conservation Awards Program was established by the National Wildlife Federation and is jointly sponsored by the Virginia Wildlife Federation and Sears, Roebuck & Company.

J. Marshall Coleman, Attorney General for the State of Virginia presented the major address at the ceremony during which he and Henry Horton, representing Sears Roebuck and Company, jointly presented the major awards to the recipients.

Christmas in Virginia

BY SANDY COLEMAN

Christmas. The time of holly, cedar, pine trees, good wishes and merry company.

From Colonial days onward, Virginians have celebrated the holiday season with a zest that leaves dour New Englanders envious. Did Williamsburg have the nation's first Christmas tree? Though opinions differ on that fine point, there can be no doubt that Virginia did have the first celebration of the Christmas season on the soil of the new world.

According to the records of early Jamestown, the winter of 1607 found fewer than 40 of the original 100 settlers alive. Famine and disease had taken many of the colonists and promised reinforcements had never arrived. Despite this bleak situation, the Jamestown natives still found the strength to attend church services and listen to the message: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord."

A year later, however, the prospects for the weary colonists were much brighter and their Christmas celebrations reflected this. The feast was a gift of the Indians, one that they would long remember. As it was recorded they "were never more merry, nor fed on more good oysters, fish, flesh, wild foul and good bread." This was a change, indeed, from the roasted pheasant of their native land.

Later in Virginia's history, new traditions developed and those from the old lands were carried over. A typical Christmas day would see the family attending church in the morning in a white, tall-spired church. The night before would have seen the revelers lighting the Yule Log, an English tradition. The lighting of the fire was meant to drive the devils out of the house for the year ahead – thus, the log must burn brightly during the entire season. Sprigs of holly were cast into the fire, representing the troubles of the past year. By casting them into the blaze, you forever banished them from your life. Then, in the traditional colonial Christmas celebration, candles would be lit from the yule fire and wine was poured on the log to protect the house from ghosts and other things that go bump in the night.

Also, one tradition still practiced today by many families was the morning hunt for deer or fox. For many this was the highlight of a traditional celebration.

The famed lavishness of life among Virginia planters carried over into their Christmas observances. Hospitality was the order of the day and balls and weddings were closely tied to the Christmas season. One settler was said to have held a ball during the holidays that lasted six days!

Virginia set the fashion for one of the South's special ways of marking Christmas – with gunpowder. Instead of the bells rung in England, colonists turned to firearms to provide a fitting noise to ring in the season. A neighbor upon hearing a blast, would do likewise until the land reverberated with the noise.

Williamsburg, always the center of Virginia culture, became even more the core of the colonial Christmas celebration. Many planters and their families spent the season in that city.

The Christmas tree didn't make its appearance until the 1840's. The custom that originated in Germany was brought to the Old Dominion by a young teacher living in Williamsburg. The tutor, Charles Minnegerode, called frequently at the house of Judge Nathaniel Beverly Tucker, a professor of law at William and Mary. He almost certainly told the Tucker children the story of Martin Luther bringing the trees into the homes of German families. Luther, according to legend, was walking through the woods one evening and saw stars shining through the branches of a fir tree. He was so struck by the thought that it must resemble the shining night when Christ was born, that he instituted the tradition of decorating the branches of trees and placing them in the home.

Thus, the Christmas of 1842 found Minnegerode decorating a tree in the house of the Tucker family. Though probably not the first tree on American soil, it still ranks as one of the great moments in the history of early Christmas celebrations.

Today, Virginia families celebrate Christmas in their own individual fashion, many carrying on traditions for generations. One thing is certain, however, the feelings and joys of Virginians during the season of peace and good will have remained unchanged for over 370 years. May the traditions continue.

SNOWBOUND

BY PAT COOLEY

At least once a year, nature stunningly entertains, with an extravagant and spectacular show. Soft and delicate pure white flakes of snow daintily race diagonally downward. Peacefully floating from the heavens, sometimes circling dizzily, twirling, whirling, dancing in the gray sky, and sometimes dropping heavily straight down, the snow silently and lightly dusts every available surface.

Straining to study each minute, six-pointed speck gently gliding to a landing, sprinkling my coat with snow, I learned no two flakes are alike. Some of these small, white crystals of frozen water are smooth and rounded, some pointed and spiked. A few of the faint flakes slowly melting on my sleeve were oddly triangular with two points on each end, and one was hexagonally squared off. Amazing! I could only imagine what fascinating arrangements a magnifying glass would reveal.

Squint-eyed, avoiding cold, tumbling droplets and a blinding glare, I gazed up through the shower of white crystals, realizing, in less than no time, the light dusting had changed into a spotless white blanket, fashioning the most unsightly sights into elegant, soft scenes.

Trampling over the cushion-like blanket, I became intrigued by the great clinging strength of each tiny flake — trapeze artists — gripping and grabbing, hanging and balancing on anything and everything. Plunging white moss clung to and softly outlined dark, bare branches, shading, tinting and accenting. Each hugging crystal nuzzled and tucked into every fork, every crevice and every nook and cranny, helping to create the dazzling show. Glistening particles of snow lazily piled on old, downed logs, warped wooden fences, and even the pony's sleek, chestnut back. Leaping delicate flakes hurriedly ran up cold, black tree trunks.

However, the snow massing over the ground was becoming an adhesive nuisance, like cohering dots of cement. The dogs, pushing their black polished snouts into the new snow, paused to frantically lick, pull and chew persisting balls of the white stuff from pink, now tender paws. Even I had to stamp my thick boots to free the heavy residue of snow mounting on my ridged rubber soles.

Four inches of tenacious snow now surrounded me as I observed in wonderment the extravaganza each adhereing white flake had velvetly sketched. The scrawniest twig became enchanting, and a snarling, tangling bramble bush, which brutally attacks my legs everytime I pass this way became beautifully captivating. Dry, bleached, crackly leaves, miraculously still holding on to a few winter branches, evolved into soft, hanging, snowy white pillows. Brightly green needled conifers heavily burdened with excessive snow seemed adorned in fluffy, white furs.

Overwhelming! The gracefully rolling meadow was exquisitely gilded with snow. Tranquil and unblemished, the field resembled stiffly beaten egg whites, smoothly and evenly spread about.

To my bewilderment, not one winding path dashed, zigzagged, or crisscrossed over the snowbound field to mar its flawless surface. In the whitened woodlands a few tiny bird tracks skipped over the snow. The fliting imprints were accompanied by a semi-circular, fluted motif spread on each side of the tiny track. The snow was evidently too soft, the bird dropping through the white surface, fluttering his wings to escape. Roving, jumping paths of a lone rabbit mingled through the trees, hopping leisurely, large hind feet landing ahead of his smaller front paws. The gap between each set of prints began to widen, the rabbit, most likely speeding through the snow upon my arrival. The snow made tracking easy, but I found no other rummaging tracks, not even the creviced imprints of a rambling deer jogging through the splendid snow. Deer, with their sharp hooves, would have difficulty bounding through this massive covering, especially, if a warm melting day formed a thin, breaking, cutting crust of ice. As the snow conceals leaves, twigs,

The enchantment of a winter day is one of nature's true joys

berries, roots and nuts, locating food supplies also becomes an increasing struggle. Squirrels and other animals have been known to tunnel under a bank of snow in traveling from one hoard of food to another, and small birds desperately rely on human handouts. But now, hardly an animal stirs, realizing the hazards of the ensnaring snow. Turkey vultures and red-tailed hawks ceased soaring over the embellished field, as they had every day before.

A sweeping wind was beginning to tear through the idle meadow, stripping its white blanket, piling the misting, gusting, lashing snow into flowing accumulations, heaped high in running drifts. However, the wisking wind did not beat its way through the woodlands, to a placid, spongy marsh.

Dark shadows streaked whitened surfaces as the thawing sun brilliantly emerged through disintegrating gray clouds. Soon, all the prisoners of the bounding snow would be freed.

FROM BLOCK TO BIRD

BY SANFORD H. VERNICK

We think of them today as art objects and sometimes forget that they were originally created as a utilitarian item, not just something to satisfy man's aesthetic nature.

They had to be durable, lifelike on the water and yet be made along simple lines so that they could be sold for a reasonable price.

The advent of the inexpensive plastic decoy signalled the demise of the handcarved wooden bird. Suddenly attention was focused on the artistic merits of the American decoy and the dedicated collector was born.

Most of the handmade birds used in the United States came from the East coast, especially Harve de Grace, Maryland and Chincoteague, Virginia. Carvers developed their own loyal following and Captain Cigar Daisey merited one of the most dedicated collection of fans.

Cigar's rank is an honorary one bestowed as a mark of respect for his ability as a waterman, something highly thought of on Chincoteague, and the nickname comes from his love of a good cigar.

Now the carver in residence at Chincoteague's Waterfowl Refuge Museum, Cigar loves to talk to visitors of the old days of ducks and decoys.

Unlike many of his contemporaries who carve on an assembly line basis using many assistants and power tools, Cigar carves each bird painstakingly and lovingly, using hand tools almost entirely. The result is a finished bird highly prized by collectors.

Cigar's history is one shared by most of Chincoteague's natives. His parents, also born and raised on Chincoteague, were poultry farmers, but his father, like most island men, was equally at home on the water.

Cigar carved his first ducks in the early 1940's to be used as gunning decoys by his father and himself. In 1964, just about the time that interest was beginning to be centered on the artistic merits of the decoy, Cigar sold his first bird. His reputation began to grow steadily from that first sale.

In 1968, Cigar entered a bufflehead in the National Decoy Contest held in New York and he placed second. Later that same year, he entered a black duck in the Mid West Decoy Show in Michigan and was rewarded with a blue ribbon. Since that time, his perception, sensitivity and talented hands have earned for him more than 30 First Place ribbons in national competitions.

Today, Cigar holds forth at the Refuge Waterfowl Museum, letting urbanites — and even island natives — see the creation of his superbly detailed decoys.

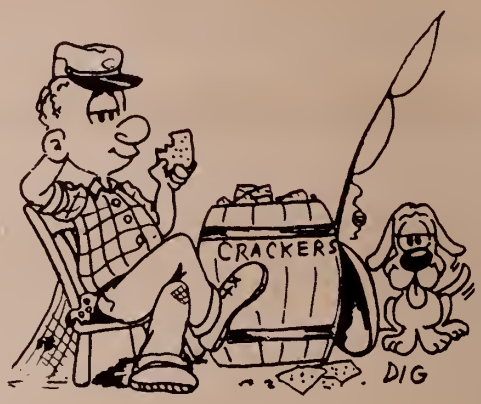
Cigar and the museum is a glimpse into the somehow mystical past of ducks and decoys. It is a trip well worth taking.

It Appears To Me
By Curly

. . . . A PERSON OUGHT TO HAVE ONE

Recently there has been a great deal of interest in the effects of phosphorus on freshwater. It seems that pollution of this type can be reversed according to some scientists up at Cornell University. These gentlemen have produced a bulletin entitled "Lakes and Phosphorus Inputs: A Focus on Management" which outlines a study which, although conducted in the State of New York, is applicable to similar bodies of freshwater. If anyone is involved with combating this type of pollution the bulletin is available from Mailing Room, Buidling 7, Research Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. 14853. Ask for Bulletin No. 127, its free.

Although we normally don't think in terms of insect pests during these cold winter months it really is a pretty good time to cogitate on their capers and to calculate just how we can foil the wily-wigglies. To help us out in this regard the good folks down at the National Wildlife Federation got a conglomeration of facts together which they call "pest management" or the "three P's." In their publication "Fighting Pests With Pests" they explain the "P's" as insect predators, parasites, and pathogens as being a method of using natural enemies of pests rather than employing harmful chemicals. An example of this activity would be the planting of soybeans near corn. The soybeans act as a "trap plant" in keeping away chinch bugs. The publication is full of handy hints of this type and you know it just might make a dandy stocking stuffer with "that day" being just around the corner. Single copies are free. Request "Fighting Pests With Pests" from the National Wildlife



Federation, Dept. PW, 1412 16th st., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The next item isn't really free but my goodness $.25 these days is almost that amount what with our dive-bombing dollar. Anyhow if you are a backpacker or would like to be or to learn about this favorite and fast-growing activity there is a catalogue you just gotta have. It is called "Wilderness Bookstore" and in it are listed over 700 titles of backpacking, camping and outdoor books. Send your twenty-five cents for postage, mention "Northeast Memo" and address your request to Backpacker Books, Main Street, Orwell, Vermont 05760.

. . . . FOR YOUR BOOK SHELF

Hey! You Bike-riders. . . . of the self-propelled type. How would you like to have a publication which tells about the East Coast Bicycle Trail which runs from good-ole Richmond, Virginia clean up to Boston Massachusetts? Well sirs and madames there is just such a book. It is *A Guide* to the trail and is distributed by the East Coast Bicycle Congress for $4.95 per copy. You can order the publication from the ECBC, 333 E. 25th, Baltimore, Maryland 21218 and you won't go wrong.

While we are on the subject of trails there is another publication entitled *Massachusetts/Rhode Island Trails Guide*. This one, although a bit on the expensive side ($7.95), is a dandy. Published by the Appalachian Mountain Club, the book is available from Appalachian Mountain Club, 5 Joy Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108.

It's really very, very good and so inexpensive you won't believe that so much excellent advice, detail and just common sense could be crammed into this 24 pager. As far as I am concerned *All About The Shooting Sports* couldn't have come at a better time. Not only is it available for a special Christmas gift but it is also admirably suited for just "anytime givin" to the folks that are favorite to you. Authored by people whose names will be familar to most of you (John Madson, Daniel Poole, Robert Stack and Capt. James Lovell just to mention a few) the pittance price of twenty-five cents, which *includes* postage, will get you a single copy. Now if you want a quantity of these booklets, for a club or hunter-safety class they are available for $9.00 per hundred. Address your order to The National Shooting Sports Foundation, 1075 Post Road, Riverside, Connecticut 06878. . . . or thank Santa if you are lucky enough to get a copy from him.

. . . . AND THEN

Gentle people, the good Lord has seen fit for us to make it through another twelve months. The hay is all put up, the corn is shucked and it is a time when we all need to thank our maker for his many blessings. . . especially on *his* day. Merry Christmas!

Growing Up Outdoors

BY SANDY COLEMAN

CHRISTMAS CRAFTS

Illustration by Diane Grant

"Boy, do I love Christmas!" Amy said happily as she snuggled down into her bed. "When do we get to decorate the tree, Mom?"

"Well, I think we might do that this weekend," her mother answered the freckle-faced little girl. "Do you think that you and Matt can find time to help us?" she asked with a grin.

"Oh, yes! Of course we can, Mom!"

Soon Amy was quietly sleeping dreaming of sugar plum fairies and nutcrackers in the shape of soldiers. Rover, sleeping near her was dreaming equally happily of mice.

"Hey, Amy," Matt said the next day. "Mom said that we get to decorate the tree the day after tomorrow." Matt crunched his cereal contentedly.

"I know. I'm really excited. I think that maybe that is the best part of Christmas."

"Amy, you say that about every part! But, anyway, I was thinking that you know how we always put the same ornaments on the tree year after year... why don't we make some of our own this year? That way they would really be ours. They would be neat to have next year, too."

"That sounds like a good idea, besides I think we would have a lot of fun making them. What kind should we make?" Amy answered.

"Well, that's up to you, Amy. It has to be your idea or the whole ornament wouldn't be yours." Matt looked at Amy and smiled smugly. "I already know what I'm going to do."

"What?" Amy asked the question that Matt had hoped she would.

"If I told you that, then it wouldn't be just mine," he answered.

"Oh, Matt!"

That afternoon found the brother and sister sitting on the rug in the den busy with their crafts.

Matt was busy with pieces of tree bark and string.

"See, this makes a neat ornament. I'm going to paint little stars and angels on the other side."

Amy admired Matt's work, but was more pleased with her own. With her mother's help, Amy had cut out cardboard in the shapes of stars and angels blowing little horns. She was covering them with aluminum foil.

"Amy, that's really pretty," Matt said some time later as Amy held up her bright, shiny ornaments.

Matt's paper cup bells painted a bright red would also make terrific tree ornaments, Amy thought.

"You know, Amy, together we could make a paper chain to wrap around the tree."

"How do we do that?"

Soon the twosome were busy cutting red and green construction paper into thin strips. Later, they carefully pasted them into loops, placing the ends inside the loop next to it. Soon they had a chain long enough to wrap around the entire tree.

That evening, Matt and Amy's mother and father duly admired the children's handiwork.

"Back before there was electricity, people used to place real candles on their trees and decorate them with strung cranberries and popcorn. I don't think we should use candles, but why don't the two of you string some popcorn?"

Amy and Matt nodded enthusiastically and later found the two children stringing the kernels of popcorn into long strands.

"You know, this is the prettiest tree we've ever had!" Matt said as the family looked at the green tree gleaming with the children decorations.

I wonder what we can do next year, he thought.

FREAK OUT, SAVE FUEL

You'll find more "performance freaks" among boat owners next boating season.

The "freaks," however, will be saving a bundle by using less fuel for the same amount of boating fun; they'll be aligning themselves with the nationwide energy conservation effort; and most of them will be kicking themselves for not taking such simple steps all along.

You don't need one of today's fuel-efficient engines or an ultra-modern hull design to get more fun per gallon — not that they'd hurt. A few simple steps will coax surprisingly better fuel economy from virtually every powerboat:

—A clean hull. Many skippers are quick to whip out the sponge when the first speck of dirt hit topside. They'd do better to concentrate on the hull below the waterline, where a build-up of scum, algae or marine growth can increase friction and cut fuel efficiency. During one recent test, a boat anchored in salt water for a month lost 21 per cent of its efficiency.

If you trailer your boat each time out, it's easy — a hose-down with fresh water is all it takes. If left in the water for extended periods, the boat should be hauled as often as possible — once a month in fresh water, more often in salt water. The bottom should be attacked with a brush and mild detergent before it has a chance to dry out. After cleaning, a coat of wax should be applied in fresh water areas. Anti-fouling bottom paint is recommended in salt water, and this should never be waxed.

—Engine efficiency. A tachometer is almost indispensible, if you're really serious about saving fuel. By checking the tach, you can get up on plane, then throttle back for the most economic cruising. The engine, of course, should be properly tuned, and the lower unit kept just as clean as the hull.

—Fuel. In outboards, use the right gas-to-oil mixture to assure proper efficiency. In inboards and stern drives, use regular gas, unless premium is prescribed by the manufacturer.

—Trim. Some tilt may be necessary for unusual loads, but, in general, the lower unit of the engine should meet the water at a right angle when the boat is in its normal running attitude.

—Propeller. The prop should be kept damage free. Even a small nick can increase the cavitation rate and cut engine efficiency dramatically.

If you're buying a new boat, you should consider the powerplant carefully. You're wasting money on the purchase price and on fuel, if you buy an engine too big for your purposes. On the other hand, a powerplant too small for the boat could be a false economy, too, since full-throttle operation would be necessary to do what a bigger engine could do at an economical throttle setting.

BY HAROLD TRUMBO

CRISIS IN TURKEYLAND

Virginia has always been recognized as a "good turkey state" since Colonial times. Distribution was from the tidal area of the coast through the mountains in the west. Probably because the state is approximately sixty percent forested, it has, at some time or other, offered the necessary requirements for propagation — at least for survival.

Much has been written regarding the requirements of the wild turkey and as one author stated ". . .it's not safe to go beyond the general statement that suitable habitat is one that provides cover, food, water and has a temperate winter." Most authors agree, with some variances in acreages or percentages, that good turkey range should be composed predominately of mixed hardwoods, interspersed with pine or other conifers, and "much" of the hardwoods should be of a mast-bearing age. Any significant reduction in any one of the basic requirements will alter the suitability of that habit.

We have probably never been more aware of the effects of land-use practices than we are today through such factors as economics, behavioral patterns and population growth. It is also recognized that man and his land-use practices have more influence on turkey populations, as well as other game species, than any other single factor. Under certain conditions other factors such as hunting, predation, food and weather contribute to their stress but these can be, and most generally are, related to the basic land uses. As the size of the range diminishes, the greater the influence of these other factors.

Virginia is a case history of the effects of land use on turkey populations. In the early part of the century, the mountain region of the state was either still being subjected to extensive timber harvests, wide-spread forest fires, regeneration, or any combination of these. The wild turkey was eliminated entirely from many counties, especially in the southwest, and was barely able to survive in other counties. Through control of forest fires and good timber management practices by the U.S. Forest Service necessary state game regulations, and protection and management (also maturation of the forests), the mountains have become the leading turkey producing section of the state.

Conversely, during this period of time, the eastern part of the state still contained large areas of mature mixed hardwoods and pines and, consequently, good turkey populations. But with the human population, industrial growth and the greatly expanded wood products industries, the suitable turkey range has greatly diminished and turkeys have been eliminated in some counties — as they were in the earlier days of some southwestern counties.

Vast areas of hardwoods in many eastern counties

are being converted to the faster growing pines — a more desirable product for the paper industry. It is not uncommon to see areas containing hundreds of acres of mature hardwoods being cut and the area being prepared for pine planting. Often these are adjacent to one of equal size already planted to pine. Except during the early stages of plant succession when low herbaceous plants are present, these areas are lost for turkey production. Here enters economic factors necessary for this type of industry. However, the surviving turkeys are being confined to smaller areas where they become more exposed and vulnerable. This in turn brings other limiting factors into play and an inevitable reduction in total turkey populations.

For future survival of turkeys in these areas, it will be necessary to retain stands of desirable hardwoods of sufficient size to provide a continued supply of food. This can be partially accomplished by providing hardwood zones 2-3 chains wide along streams and drainages in areas converted to pine. In vast clear-cut areas, it would be beneficial to arbitrarily retain such strips. These should be connected wherever possible to each other or to an un-cut area to prevent having a narrow isolated strip. This would also benefit numerous other game and non-game species, especially squirrels.

Undoubtedly many and varied questions will arise regarding the acceptable size for a clear-cut and also what size should the un-cut area be. Circumstances and conditions vary from county to county — and within each county. One possibility is to begin with a basic size limit of twenty five acres for each cut as adopted by the U. S. Forest Service and separate this from other cuts by leaving an un-cut strip 2-3 chains wide; utilizing drainages and other areas difficult to manage. Normally and ideally, the shape of cut areas would be linear and irregular, but this would be waived due to limited total acreage in many tracts, as opposed to the acreage of a ranger district on a National Forest. As one travels through many of the eastern counties the seriousness of this situation is quite evident and it is hoped that some self-imposed restriction will be used.

It must be pointed out that the present timber management practice in eastern Virginia is greatly responsible for the excellent deer herds and quail populations. Additionally, lands provided by pulp and paper companies are indispensible to the hunting public. Generally, cooperation with the various companies has been excellent. However, it is disheartening to witness the destruction of turkey range and it is hoped that some modification of cutting practices will be adopted.

From Beyond The North Wind

BY JOSEPH JAMES SHOMON

They were tiny islands of green consisting of freshly cut red cedars and each day they seemed to grow in number. My snow goose mother told me to stay away from them. That should have been warning enough. My father, I remember well, only gave me one strong command in all his life. "Take the lead, my son, I'm going down!"

But those cedars in our Back Bay waters, they bothered me. Maybe I shouldn't say bothered, perhaps intrigued might be a better word. So one day I just stole away from our rafted flock and decided to investigate a little. Our bay has about thirty or forty of these peculiar green clumps where we make our winter stay. When we first came down in October they were a mixture of green and brown. The brown bushes, mother said, were cedars from last season. They were dead. The green ones were always freshly cut. I couldn't help but be intrigued by the sight of them and I wanted to investigate, but mother always stopped me. After a few weeks, the brown ones disappeared and then all the cedars were green. Mother said this was the time to stay away. But on this particular day there were brown cedars still in place.

From a safe distance I saw two men in a small boat approach one of these places and since it was nearby, my curiosity got the best of me. I know that there is always more danger to a group of geese than a loner. A single goose can slip and slide on water and stay camouflaged more easily than a flock of geese.

When I swam close to the cedars I could hear men talking, so I felt safe in knowing they had not seen me. Now and then there was the click of an instrument. At one point I overheard one man say, "There's lots of light. Stop down . . . one stop."

Then some of my winged neighbors far up the cove rose from the water, lifted their black-tipped white wings into the sky, circled noiselessly for a while and finally angled into the sun, shimmering as they went. I just paddled around the cedars and listened. Then one man spoke.

"Beautiful," he said. "Simply beautiful. They're true to their name."

I returned to our flock and mother told me that our kind of geese — *Chen hyperborea* — were geese that came from "beyond the north wind." I told mother what happened and she said the men were probably biologists or photographers and not hunters. Had they been hunters and if the hunting season was on, you'd know it by the noise.

My father, Chen, as I said, was the strong, silent type. Ever since we left the tundra in Greenland I never heard him say much. But when he did say something, it was positive. He only had to look at me with that clear dark eye, give a sort of guttural chuckle, and I knew what he meant. Mother, bless her, on the other hand, liked to talk a lot and while she scolded me a lot at first, I did not mind it. There was always a touch of warmth in what she said.

Our winter weeks at Back Bay on the Virginia Coast, following the hunting season, weren't what you would call bad. We had a few freezes and one weekend a light snow fell. Even on the coldest mornings I felt no cold. And even the icy waters were not uncomfortable as we paddled our pink feet in it on resting forays.

We were a great happy crowd that winter — feeding in the fields, flying around, splitting up into small flocks, and sometimes going north to Maryland and Delaware and back again. One week my mother and father took us to North Carolina and then on down to Cape Romain in South Carolina. We stayed a whole month because there was plenty of food there — brackish water grasses, sedges, and root-stocks of phragmites. We also grazed in the winter wheat fields. It was here that I learned how cedar bushes in fields or in water can be dangerous. Mother was right. In those wheat fields we often heard guns going off and saw our friends, the Canadian geese, taking to the air in noisy frenzy. Sometimes one or two tumbled out of the air and fell.

But the thing that made my young life so memorable was my first trip back to the North Country. So much happened and I learned so much.

Just before we left Virginia my mother said we would have a great convention. All the snow geese would gather at Back Bay — that is all the greater snow geese on the Atlantic Coast from Delaware to South Carolina. Then at one point we'd all take to the air at once in one great spectacle. But it would take days for all the snows to arrive. Goose signals would do it and my father, Chen, was responsible for the start of them.

Those tiny green islands down in Back Bay can be intriguing to a curious snow goose gander

You get a restless feeling before such a convention. This is the one time we snow geese are really garrulous. But the goose talk is serious and it concerns mostly the impending journey to our summer homeland.

All big strong ganders trumpet the main signal loudly. So when father Chen sounded his high-pitched qu-ooo--oop, we were soon joined by our neighbors. Then more families came down to join us and, finally, a group that mother called, the north bay flock. Most of us just flew around, father often in the lead, and all of us emitting our joyous *ga ga ga* calls. Then one day we were joined by another large flock, then an even larger one.

Finally we ended up being in one huge mass of shimmering birdom — a cloud of white birds over a half mile wide and a mile long. It was like a white cloud of winged angels in the heavens. My heart beat loudly as I pumped my wings in that mighty formation and I wanted to go — to go I reckon to the country "from beyond the north wind." But father looked back at me and his eye said no — "not yet, my son."

We finally came down out of that enormous cloud of living life and settled down flock by flock onto Back Bay again. When we were up in that huge formation we flew over a big boat that was apparently equipped with a loud speaker for I heard a voice say, "27,000 snows — all the birds of the Atlantic Coast in this one flock."

Two days later, on the fourth of March to be exact, the moment came. All the practicing, all the stretching, all the conventioning had now come to the final test. My chest muscles were strong as steel bands and my wings felt like tensioned springs. The time was 6:00 a.m. Father stretched his neck to the full, then pulled in a bit and uttered the most wonderful goose call you ever heard — *G-R-U-OOO-OOP!*

The signal went through me like a lightning flash. Instantly all four of us — father, mother, Cheny (my sister) and I — opened our wings, treaded water and slammed the water and air with our pinions, gaining speed and distance which sent our bodies aloft. The red morning sun was just lifting itself out of the gray horizon and we headed toward it. Other geese followed us, all talking excitedly. Soon a solid hundred of us were heading boldly for a course east of the rising sun. Inside my chest my heart swelled with joy.

When we reached six hundred feet, father turned slightly leftward and we headed over great stretches of coastal brown fields and green woods. Some of the fields were beginning to take on the awakening tinge of a lemon-green springtime. It was a good feeling and exciting — my first trip to my native motherland, the land of the Arctic tundra. Yes, we were heading to the place of many goose beginnings, of our goose ancestry, the place of pairing, mating, and the raising of new families, the bleak, lonesome, northeastern Greenland coast 2,000 miles away. And it would take weeks.

We stopped several times in our long journey: Bombay Hook, Delaware, the marshes of New Jersey and New York's Jamaica Bay. I felt strong but even a young gander must stop now and then to rest and feed. The big stopover was in the St. Lawrence Valley. It was evening when we circled St. Joachim and father signalled, down. We descended into some salt marshes where the melting ice and snow had formed some pools of open water. Many geese had already arrived and some were merely coming and going on short feeding flights. We stayed two weeks, practiced on short feeding flights when, one gray morning, father sung out his long signalling honk. We took off this time for Baffin Island. We stayed there on an icy coast for another two weeks waiting for the ice to break up. Then in early June we launched into our final trek over icy wastes to northwest Greenland.

I remember our landing well. Such a desolate place it was and right along the edge of a huge ice pack. Why come to such a faraway, cold, dreadful place, I thought.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

Outdoor Notebook

Marine Environmental Camp

Gloucester Point — For two weeks this summer the tidal marshes and barrier islands of Virginia's eastern shore hosted a mini-invasion. Not too many residents took notice, but around 45 young Virginians from all over the state probably came away with more nature facts than their parents have managed to gather in years.

Thanks to a cooperative effort by the Virginia Wildlife Federation (VWF) and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) two groups of youngsters, ages 12-14 and 15-17, spent a busy week tripping out of Wachapreague on the eastern shore. They went to conduct trawl and dredge surveys, wade the mudflats to collect clams and other natural fauna and otherwise gain an insight into the complexity and interaction of marine life.

It was a biology lesson at its best, spiced with healthy doeses of fishing, seafood feasts and boat rides over smooth ocean swells. At night, films and lectures were capped with a stroll up the street to take in a small local carnival.

According to Tom White, chairman of the VWF Youth Summer Camp Program, the object of the cooperative effort at the VIMS eastern shore facility is not to create young scientists, but young citizens who will develop an awareness and appreciation of the natural world, hopefully to carry it through life.

While billeted out of the two-story frame dormitory at Wachapreague, the youngsters were given a tour of the VIMS laboratory, where they were aquainted with aquaculture methods involving hard clams and bay scallops. Other activities during each group's stay included shoreline seining, marsh studies, a visit to a heron rookery ond on-the-spot lectures concerning the erosion and deposition of sand, plant succession, wave and current studies and water chemistry tests.

Enthusiasm for all of the activities ran high among the participants. There was very little hanging back and looking on. When a trawl was hauled, the kids did it. They got in up to their knees digging out hard clams and they cleaned their own flounder and spot. They took care of their own housekeeping chores, too.

Staff personnel associated with VIMS Sea Grant Advisory Services Department provided guidance and kept their program moving on schedule, no easy task with all that went on. Their job challenge will increase as the program grows. In only its second season, there have been many more applicants than program space can accommodate.

Everyone involved in the marine camps feel the effort is highly beneficial, and if a kid's opinion is worth anything — they're learning something pretty important.—*Dick Cook, VIMS Sea Grant Advisory Service.*

Show You Care

You're giving a gun for Christmas this year. What else do you need to make the gift complete? Ammunition? Sure. But what about a Hunter Safety Home Study Course?

Developed by Game Commission Hunter Safety Experts and by the National Rifle Association, the book is virtually everything you need to know about safety afield.

It is available at a cost of $1.00 by writing to: Hunter Safety Home Course, Virginia Game Commission, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230.

It really is the best way to show you care.

Blue Ridge Pioneers

One of the most interesting and least-known subcultures in American family life is the Appalachian mountaineer. The least known of this group is the Blue Ridge subculture.

Why?

Because the mountain family who lived there was forced out when Shenandoah National Park was formed in the 1930's.

Carolyn and Jack Reeder have made a study of that period in our history. One result of that study is a tight but fascinating book about the people who used to live there, their 19th-century way of life and what became of them when Shenandoah National Park was formed.

The book, called *Shenandoah Heritage: The Story of the People Before the Park*, is full of pictures of the period, personal anecdotes, and information culled from early Park files, National Archives, and the personal records of former inhabitants of the Park.

More than a sociological study, the book is an excursion into a way of life that exists today only in a few hollows of the Appalachians.

An outgrowth of their hiking experiences, the book is published by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 1718 N. Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036, for $3.50 plus postage and handling $ .50. It's an exciting, well-documented probe into the Blue Ridge — and "the way it used to be."

Bird Magazine Hatched

A new magazine for birders is always an exciting event and September, 1978 saw the birth of *Bird Watcher's Digest*, one of the more interesting to appear in a long while.

The magazine, printing mainly articles from newspapers all around the United States on birds and birding. It's almost pocket-sized so it is a handy item to take with you for breaks on your outdoor treks.

Subscriptions are available at $7.50 by writing to: *Bird Watcher's Digest*, P.O. Box 110, Marietta, Ohio 45750.

Published bi-monthly, it is a must for serious birders.

Calendar Fans

Everyone seemed to love the *Virginia Wildlife* Sportsman's Calendar and Dolph Hays, Commissioner for the Game Commission from Arlington was no exception.

But he went one step further.

Commissioner Hays (right) pictured here with Commission Chairman Dr. James Knight, thought that the illustrations for each month would frame beautifully, so he put his theory to the test.

William McClure of Alexandria did the framing of the monthly illustrations that now hang on Commissioner Hays wall.

By the way, the Sportsman's Calendar will be even better next year!

Saving Driving Dollars On Your Hunt

You know all about inflation, and how it has affected the price of gasoline. And you know that its effects make you think twice about budgeting and making your salary go further. So maybe you've reconsidered taking some of your hunting trips because of the expense.

You need not stop hunting though. There are many ways you can enjoy your sport and still stretch your dollars.

The first way is to explore the possibility of more local hunting. While part of the fun of hunting is getting away to a new locale and seeing new scenery, the other part of the fun involves the hiking, fresh air, and art of hunting. For that, you may not need to range far from home.

A check through your state's hunting regulations will probably show a variety of game and places to hunt within a couple hours of your house.

By economizing on such local hunts, you can be saving gas and driving habits and the care you give your vehicle.

If you're planning a long driving trip to reach your hunting destination, get a tune-up. A well-tuned engine can save you a great deal. Have the air filter checked and replaced, if necessary, for even better engine performance.

Check your owner's manual for the proper inflation levels for the tires according to the weight of the load in the vehicle. Since hunting trips may mean heavier loads in the car, your tire pressure requirements may change, but keep them inflated to whatever level they should be. That, too, will help in saving gas dollars.

Do some homework with maps beforehand so that your route takes you over the maximum number of good roads. Back country driving over gravel or dirt roads robs your fuel economy.

Drive at a steady pace — no more than 55 mph where permitted. When you start driving from a stop, accelerate slowly and steadily.

Use your air conditioner only when necessary. In many vehicles, the air conditioner increases fuel consumption.

Fill up at self-serve stations for even more savings. Sometimes these are cash-only businesses, so be sure to save some of your spending money for gasoline instead of counting on being able to use your credit cards.

Since many folks like to hunt with a buddy or two, consider the possibility of a "carpool" like arrangement instead of each driver taking his own car. That may be even one more possibility for your situation to help you save gas dollars.

The "tricks" you use to save money in your ordinary driving activities can serve you in hunting, too. That ol' penny saved can mean the difference between cancelling or going on a well-deserved hunting trip. —*Dr. Stephanie Slahor.*

Coming Next Month

BEAVERS

A look at nature's engineers in action.

SALTMARSH ECOLOGY, PART II

Curtis Badger looks at the fish found in the saltmarsh.

HUNTING WITH SAM

It's hard to beat the feeling found between master and dog.

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The Grosbeak

BY JOHN W. TAYLOR

The first officially recorded appearance of the evening grosbeak in Virginia was in March, 1940. In recent years, it has been a frequent visitor throughout much of the state during the colder months. This sudden change in distribution is one of the most extraordinary in ornithological history.

Until the 1940's, the evening grosbeak was known primarily as a bird of the northwest, nesting from Michigan to British Columbia. Its winter movements were sporadic and unpredictable. "Invasions" sometimes occurred in the New England States, but for years at a time they did not show up at all in the east. Always, its migration pattern, when there was one, was east-west, rather than north-south.

After the 40's, these movements, though always unpredictable, began to show a southward trend. One flock had reached Washington in 1922, but only two decades later, did they began to visit the mid-Atlantic states with some regularity.

The breeding range has been extended, as well. Though the nucleus of the population still breeds in the northwest, many grosbeaks breed in the spruce forests of northern Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire.

The causes of this unusual change in distribution patterns are not fully understood. Some have postulated that periodic failures of their food supply in the northwest have driven them eastward; others believe that it has been the increase in artificial feeding, especially of sunflower seeds, that has induced the change. Possibly it has been the combination of these, plus other factors as yet unknown.

Certainly, these grosbeaks are fond of sunflower seeds and their presence, at least here in the south, is directly dependent on this staple. The birds seem to wander about in search of feeding stations and congregate at well stocked ones.

Whatever the cause, most of us are pleased that the evening grosbeak has increased hereabouts. It is a strikingly attractive species. Its deep yellows and rich browns, sharply accented with blacks and whites, provide a color combination quite unlike that of any other North American bird. The large, chunky body (about 8") and heavy, pale yellow bill are also characteristic.

Females and immatures are not as sporty in appearance. Muted grays replace the yellows and browns, but there remains a tinge of yellow about the sides and back. The white tips of the tail coverts and wing feathers give them a somewhat pied or harlequin appearance.

The evening grosbeak must reserve its song for the lonely isolation of the spruce forests. Described as a brief, uneven warble, it is almost never heard while the birds are on their off-season peregrinations. Its call note, on the other hand, is delivered often and with no sign of inhibition. A loud, chirping *kleer*, it has been likened to the call of the common house sparrow, but with a more ringing, wilder quality.

The evening grosbeak was one of the last North American birds to be discovered. Not until 1823 was a specimen taken (by Henry R. Schoolcraft in Michigan). Two years later it was duly described for science and named by William Cooper.

Cooper used more imagination than did many who first named our North American birds. The generic name *hesperiphona* refers to the greek *hesperis*, meaning "western" and phone, "sound". Literally, it would translate "singer from the west." But there is further the romantic allusion to the *hesperides*, mythical daughters of the night, who lived on the western edge of the world. Certainly it was an appropriate name for birds which were known only from what was at the time the ornithological western edge of the world.

Hesperis, meaning western, also has connotations of sunset, or evening. The specific name *vespertina* also alludes to evening. The birds were thought to sing only at dusk, or after dark.

Or at least, so say all the textbooks. It seems quite possible, and more likely, that the common name "evening" may have been the result of a confused or mis-translation of the scientific name. It seems to have been the only common name ever used for this species; Audubon called it so when he painted it in 1836.

JOHN W TAYLOR

SNOW GOOSE *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28*

But then a young gander does not ask many questions. He simply studies the situation hard and it soon all makes sense as you observe your parents.

Mother told me, for instance, that our pothole by the ice pack was where I was born, yes, a little over 13 months ago. She had come with father to another nearby place and in seven days laid five eggs. She lost no time in incubating them when a white Arctic fox ruined everything after eight days. There was always lots of danger about — Arctic gulls, ravens, parasitic jaegers — and mother always concealed her nest well when she left for water. But one day this fox came upon her and father and drove them away. Father hissed savagely and even flew at him but it did no good. Mother said she hissed and snapped viciously with her bill. So did father. But the fox lunged heavily for the fifth time and drove mother off.

Mother renested right away on a peninsula that father had picked out but was only able to lay three eggs. I was first to hatch. Then came Cheny, and then another brother.

We were a happy family, mother and father and us three goslings. We learned a lot: the art of swimming, dodging things, and eating very quickly. Mother always took to the water first. We followed. And father herded us from the rear. This is when I first realized how wonderful home was — how spacious and peaceful the tundra wetlands seemed to be. We ate mostly green seaweed along the ice floes and sedges and cottongrass. The buds of dwarf Arctic willow and birch were also good. Generally we filled up on them in the evening.

When mother and father started to molt, we lost our youngest brother. He was slow in getting out of an open patch of water and a big white owl came by in the twilight and picked him up.

By September our flight feathers grew full length and we began to practice flying. Mother's new feathers had come on strong and father's did also. Now all we did was eat and exercise our wings.

One morning we took off from Greenland and after a week found ourselves, once again, on St. Joachim peninsula. This time there were about 15,000 geese on hand, half of them young. We stayed 2½ weeks and then departed with a dozen small family groups. Before long we were back on Jamaica Bay, then Cape May, pretty soon in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. And, once again, it was those tiny cedar islands that bothered me.

So one day I went down to one of these places to investigate for certain. There was no one in the blind and I promptly paddled into the boat slip. How lovely and intriguing this world was. A breeze was softly whining through the cedar boughs and the Back Bay waters were lapping musically against the cedar posts. I just twirled round and round and closed my eyes. Then I heard some shattering noises. It was the sound of powerful wings beating the air, cold, crisp wing beats over St. Joachim, and I could see father in front, beak open, panting. We had fed in the brown fields of the St. Lawrence Valley at the foot of an orchard hillside and Mom and Dad gulped great quantities of water. Mother spat out some bad food but father somehow got too much, probably dieldrin, a kind of poison.

As we rode northward over that vast Canadian landscape, father's beak kept opening more and more. Then his power slowed and I edged up alongside of him. His eyes were glassy but he called out loud and clear: "Take the lead, my son, I am going down!"

He did go down and said no more. I was saddened deeply over it all but a new found strength drove me into the lead. Yes, I would be the new snow goose gander leading our new spring flock back to Greenland.

But it really was not quite that way. A stiff blow spun me in the blind and I came to my senses and I fully realized I was in a forbidden place. Besides, mother was calling for me from a cove in Back Bay, and, I could almost see in my mind's eye the critical look on my father's face. But it was a good look and it propelled me out of that hunter's duck and goose blind once and for all. Those places can be dangerous for a curious young goose gander.

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Chipmunk illustration by Alan Carman

Merry Christmas from

Virginia Wildlife